



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1940

HUNTERS URGED TO REDUCE LOSSES OF CRIPPLED BIRDS

The annual loss of crippled or unretrieved migratory waterfowl and upland game birds is a serious drain on game bird population, the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, reported today. Although some of these losses are considered unavoidable, a large percentage of them result from attempts to bag birds beyond the effective range of the gun, officials said. Hunters are urged to wait until the birds are well within range before firing.

Recognizing the seriousness of losses from crippled birds, sportsmen's organizations throughout the country this year are stressing the importance of "within-effective-range" shooting. In Nation-wide advertising campaigns, commercial firms likewise are cautioning the hunter against out-of-range shooting.

In an investigation conducted by the Pennsylvania Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, it was revealed that of 631 birds shot by 176 hunters, 202 birds, or 32 percent, were lost. "Extremely long shots result in many winged birds which prove difficult to capture, especially in dense cover," the report of the investigator stated.

Similar findings were reported from Iowa in 1933 in a study of the losses of cripples in small game hunting. This study showed 50 percent of the birds shot were lost. Thus, for each bird actually bagged by the hunters observed in this study another was wounded or killed but eluded the hunter's search.

The Pennsylvania unit is financially sponsored by the Pennsylvania State College, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the American Wildlife Institute and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Pennsylvania study was issued in the form of a printed report which may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, or the Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pennsylvania.

"Shooting out-of-range birds probably causes more cripples than any other single factor," the report says. Undoubtedly many sportsmen unintentionally shoot out of range, it adds, explaining that some hunters do not know how large a game bird appears when viewed at a distance of 50 yards. It suggests that inexperienced hunters might profitably pace off 50 yards and at that distance look at a target the size of the game bird sought.

Dogs are important in reducing losses. Pierce E. Randall, who made the investigation, found that while experienced hunters crippled fewer birds than did less experienced sportsmen, the experienced hunters with dogs crippled and lost still fewer wildfowl.

"There is no doubt but that the use of well-trained retrieving dogs secures for the sportsman much game that otherwise would be wasted," Randall declared.

Out of a group of 176 cooperating sportsmen, the novice hunters without dogs reported the largest loss of game birds. These hunters lost 46.7 percent of the birds shot. Average hunters without dogs lost 70, or 39.8 percent, of the 176 birds shot by this class. Veteran hunters without dogs lost 19 of the 71 birds shot, or 26.8 percent.

Hunting with a dog reduced the loss of crippled and unretrieved birds, Randall pointed out. Novices with dogs decreased their losses to 36.8 percent, average hunters to 23.8 percent, and veteran hunters to 15.5 percent.

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